

Research shows that approximately 90 percent of people who died by suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition at the time of their death, often undiagnosed or untreated. For suicide loss survivors, understanding this connection can be part of making sense of a death that resists making sense. A diagnosis alone did not cause the death, but it is part of the picture that survivors deserve to understand.

## The 90 Percent Statistic

- Psychological autopsy research, cited by the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#), finds that roughly 90 percent of people who died by suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition, even if they were never formally diagnosed or in treatment.
- Most people living with mental health conditions do not die by suicide. A diagnosis increases vulnerability but does not determine the outcome.

## How Individual Diagnoses Affect Suicide Risk

- A [major study in Psychiatric Services](#) found that schizophrenia spectrum disorders carry roughly 15 times the odds of suicide death, and bipolar disorder carries 13 times the odds, compared to people with no mental health diagnosis.
- Depressive disorders showed about 7 times the odds, anxiety disorders about 6 times, and ADHD about 2.4 times, with ADHD risk rising sharply when depression or substance use is also present.
- When more than one condition is present, risks compound. Many people who died by suicide were carrying several conditions at once, often without anyone around them knowing.

## When the Illness Hides Itself

- NAMI describes anosognosia as a neurological condition where the illness itself damages self-awareness. Roughly 40 percent of people with bipolar disorder and up to 50 percent with schizophrenia are affected. The person is not in denial; the brain genuinely cannot perceive that something is wrong.
- This is the most common reason people stop taking medication or disengage from treatment. For survivors asking why their person would not get help, this is often part of the answer.

## No Single Cause: How Multiple Things Converge

- Researchers use a stress-vulnerability framework to explain why vulnerability alone does not produce a suicide death. What produces it is the convergence of several things at once: a biological predisposition, psychological pain, a precipitating stressor, and an absence of protective factors, often arriving in a very short window of time.
- This matters for survivors who keep returning to one moment. No single failure point explains what happened. The death was the result of a terrible alignment of many things, most of them invisible to everyone around the person.

## Prior Attempts and What the Research Shows

- A prior suicide attempt is the single strongest documented predictor of a future suicide death. At the same time, Harvard research shows that roughly 9 in 10 people who survive an attempt do not go on to die by suicide. About 7 percent of attempters eventually die by suicide.
- Roughly 60 percent of people who died by suicide did so on what was their first attempt. Many survivors had no prior attempt to know about, and those who did were not responsible for bridging the gap between a known attempt and effective ongoing care.

---

### Source

<https://sunflowersaftersuicide.com/mental-health-and-suicide-loss/>